

Christmas in Colonial Times

THE Christmas turkey at Mount Vernon was a wild bird, and merely a game dish when Mrs. Washington, in the early days before the Revolution—her husband was then only an eminent citizen of Virginia—rolled up her sleeves and stood to carve it.

In those days it was considered a matter of course that a lady should know how to carve, though (as was the case with the mistress of Mount Vernon) she might not spell correctly. The accomplishment, like the making of jams and cider, was appropriate for a housewife.

Christmas at Mount Vernon in those times was an exceedingly jolly and festive occasion. Washington was the richest man in Virginia, and the equipments of his household were in many respects more luxurious than could be found in the houses of his well-to-do neighbors. For example, the guests at this Christmas dinner were provided with silver forks—a rare luxury at that period, when gentlemen customarily ate with their knives, because it was out of the question to lift peas and many other such edibles to the mouth with the three-tined steel forks commonly in use.

It is a shock to learn that the father of his country ate with his knife, yet such is undeniably the fact. That sage historian, Peter Parley, tells a story (probably apocryphal) of an occasion when somebody tried to kill the immortal George by putting poison on his pens. Shoving his knife beneath a few of them, and raising them to his lips, he looked across the table at his enemy, and said, "Shall I eat of these?" Still holding the knife suspended, he again transfixed the man with his gaze and repeated the question. So overcome was the would-be poisoner by Washington's seeming presence that he fled from the table and the perilous pens remained uneaten.

At that epoch, in Virginia, the men who waited on the table in most of the country houses wore plantation garb. At Mount Vernon, however, the household servants were attired in a handsome and even striking livery of scarlet, white and gold, and the butler was a dream of gorgeousness. One man for each two guests was the minimum allowance. Not only were there viands to be supplied, but a constant succession of bottles containing wines of choice vintage for the consumption of the male guests.

Ladies in those days drank next to nothing at all. To take more than a sip of wine, for either maid or matron, would have been regarded as the height of impropriety. But for the men—all through this Christmas dinner the bottles were kept going around. Mr. Bryan Fairfax of Alexandria would say to Mr. G. W. Lewis across the table, "George, a glass of wine with you!" "With pleasure, Cousin Bryan!" the latter would reply, as he bowed and drank. Then Mr. Fairfax would go through the same performance with every man at the table—and so it went throughout the repast.

The entables served at the dinner were nearly all of them products of the Mount Vernon estate. From a gastronomic point of view, no region in the world was richer than that section of old Virginia. There were canvassack ducks to be shot on the river in front of the house; partridges and venison were plentiful, and the proprietor of the mansion raised his own beef, pork, and mutton. The only vegetables were sweet potatoes, white potatoes, and beans.

From a latter-day standpoint the repast was conducted in a peculiar fashion. All the dishes, including three kinds of meats and several of game, were put on the table at once. While Mrs. Washington carved the turkey, the gentlemen who happened to be opposite the mutton, the venison, etc., were expected to lend expert assistance in the dissection of those comestibles. The puddings were eaten before the withdrawal of the cloth, the removal of which left bare a shining expanse of mahogany, upon which the fruit, nuts, and dainties were set forth in festive array.

When the cloth had been withdrawn, the host would lift his glass, filled with choice Madeira, and drink the health of his guests. Five minutes of general conversation would follow, perhaps, and then Mrs. Washington would rise, giving the signal for the departure of the ladies. Everybody would get up; the ladies would make an elaborate curtsy to the gentlemen, and the latter would bow profoundly in response. With the retirement of the women the real drinking would



begin, and might be kept up almost indefinitely, though, for his part, Washington never went beyond a second glass of wine, and it was his usual custom to leave the table within a few minutes after his wife had gone.

Toasts, in those days, were never drunk until after the ladies had left the table, and no beauty's health was ever pledged in this fashion while she was present. But when the men found themselves alone, it was the proper thing for a young gentleman to get upon his feet—which, it is to be hoped, were still steady—and to say, "I give you Betty Lomax, the most beautiful girl in Westmoreland county!" Or perhaps it might be Susan Lee of Rappahannock. Such a toast was customary drunk standing—with all the honors, as the phrase was.

Indeed, Christmas was a great day of festivity in the Virginia of that epoch. Breakfast was at eight or nine o'clock, unless it had been decided to go a-hunting in the morning—in which case the meal was eaten by candle-light. If there was a fox-hunt—a sport of which Washington was very fond—the host wore a brilliant red waistcoat trimmed with gold lace, and the ladies who rode were beautiful in scarlet habits. On such occasions Mrs. Washington would go out in her "chariot and four," keeping as close to the hunt as the roads would permit. Not until 1785 were the Mount Vernon kennels abolished and the dogs sold.

Those were days when meals were ample, but were not multiplied. Eating, when undertaken, was no mere frivolity, but serious business. This Christmas dinner was at 3:30 p. m.; there had been no lunch, and there was no supper to come. After dinner there were games—blind man's buff, hunt the slipper, and the like—with much romping and more or less kissing. A sprig of mistletoe was hung up in a convenient place, and if a girl happened to be kissed under it by a young man she did not faint or call for help. In fact, it might be suspected that she did not seriously object.

Never, and nowhere, in this world were there more capable and expert makers of love than the young men of Washington's day in old Virginia. Nobody ever saw jollier fellows than they were. If they loved fiercely, they proved their sincerity by marrying early; and, when one of them was so unfortunate as to lose his wife, he would invariably marry again. Marriage was considered just about the most important duty of life, and the love affairs of the gentlemen were freely confided even to the servants. Black Tom knew that Mrs. James was "going after" Miss Sallie Lee, and would talk the matter over with his young master. And it was the same way with the girls.

So it may easily be imagined that on a festive occasion such as this Christmas celebration a good deal of incidental love-making, some of it serious enough, was accomplished. But the Master of the Revels, though he himself had been sufficiently ardent in his youth, was in later life no eager sympathizer with such follies.

Though Mr. Washington took no part in the romps that followed the dinner, he heartily enjoyed the fun. Occasionally he relished a game of cards, and probably on this Christmas evening he indulged in some such amusement, in company with the older people, while the young folks scampered and romped. He played for money, but the stakes were small.

There were two young people at Mount Vernon in those days—the son and daughter of Mrs. Washington by her first husband. It is easy to imagine the part they took in the romps on Christmas day. John and Martha, their names were, but everybody knew them as Jacky and Patsy. Patsy died in 1773, when just budding into womanhood, while her brother married young, and had four children, two of whom, George and Nellie Custis, were adopted by Mr. Washington. To George he left the famous Arlington estate, opposite the city of Washington, which afterwards fell by inheritance to the wife of Gen. Robert E. Lee.

On Christmas eve there was a dance, to which all the neighbors for many miles around were, as a matter of course, invited. The party began before eight, and was over by ten o'clock. Young ladies' beauty in those times was not spoiled by late hours. For music there was a single fiddle, played by an old slave on the place—a white-haired negro who kept the time and helped on the tune by pounding on the floor with his big foot.

All the young ladies wore low-necked dresses, making a brave display of pretty shoulders, and the men were in knee-breeches and silk stockings. Mrs. Washington's gown, cut V-shaped and filled in with ruching, was of French silk; but the clothing she ordinarily wore was of domestic manufacture, being woven at Mount Vernon, where no fewer than sixteen negro women were kept

constantly at work in what was called the "spinning-house." This industrial annex of the establishment remains to this day, and visitors at Mount Vernon are taken by the guides to see the very room in which the spinning-wheels were operated.

Of course, there was high festival not only for the master and his guests, but also for "my people," as Washington was accustomed to call the negroes on his estate. He would never have thought of speaking of them as slaves. There were at that period about one hundred negroes on the place, and at the Yuletide season they enjoyed exceptional privileges. Good things for their consumption were distributed with no niggard hand by the mistress of the house, a treat much appreciated being a drink known as "methibler," composed of fermented honey, spices, and water. Another beverage brewed by Mrs. Washington was a sort of peach brandy sweetened with honey.

Those were days when a capable housewife was supposed to know how to compound a variety of beverages. Beer was brewed at Mount Vernon under Mrs. Washington's own supervision, and elder as well, the latter being a drink of which her husband was very fond. He always had it on the table at dinner, and would take it freely in place of the wines which were more to the taste of his guests.

By ten o'clock in the evening the festivities of Christmas day at Mount Vernon were over. Even had the fashion of the time been otherwise, Mrs. Washington would scarcely have tolerated late hours. She always insisted on putting her husband to bed early, and he meekly obeyed. Whether it be true or not, as some chroniclers have asserted, that Mr. Washington was henpecked, it is certain that he considered it judicious to submit in most things to his wife's wishes.

The frame for this picture of a Christmas at Mount Vernon before the Revolution is ready made; for, thanks to the efforts of patriotic women, the old mansion stands today almost exactly as it was when Washington lived there. There is much of the old furniture, and even a great deal of the old china and glassware. The house is a veritable fragment of American history, and though more than a century and a quarter has gone by since the merry Yuletide festival here described, the imagination readily re-creates the old place with its throng of guests, eating, drinking, dancing, and making love, and hears the joyous laughter of the romping young folks, while through the crowd moves the stately figure of the host, who, offering his hand to the prettiest girl in the room, proceeds to lead her through the graceful and decorous steps of a minuet.

Have You Discovered It?

"Merry Christmas, Rodney!" sang out Jerry as he dashed out of the alley dragging a hand-made sled.

"Merry Christmas nothing!" replied Rodney morosely.

"What's the matter with it?" asked Jerry. "I heard you got a lot of presents."

"I wanted a motorcycle and didn't get it," growled Rodney.

"I'm sorry, Rod," said Jerry sympathetically. "If you get time, come on over and see the tree we rigged up for the kiddies last night. There come Jakey McGinnis and his twin sister. Jerry hurried on down the street, loaded the McGinnis twins on his sled and had a great time coasting.

Jerry had discovered how to make Christmas a success. He was the embodiment of the spirit of Christmas—which is best expressed by the little word, joy.

Jerry—does he live in your block?—is the kind of lad who gets so much joy out of life that a lot of it spills over and lands on the next fellow. He wants everybody to be just as happy as he is. He would like to see Rodney get his motorcycle if it would make Rodney any happier.

We have a suspicion, however, that if Rodney had received the motorcycle he would not have found the joy-trail by riding it.

May Christmas bring everybody all the good things possible! But let us remember that Christmas joy is not spelled with the letters G—E—T. It is what we bring to the day that makes Christmas a joy-time—Boys' World.

JOY EVERY DAY.

Why not more days of loving care, With garlands hung up everywhere, And candles bright, and carols gay— Why not have Christmas every day?

CHRISTMAS.

A Homemade Drama in Four Acts and an Epilogue.

Act I—Anticipation—The shopper and the shop.

Act II—Expectation—"You can't guess what I bought for Christmas."

Act III—Realization—"Just what I wanted."

Act IV—Vexation—"Darned old Junk! Hang Christmas, anyhow!"

Epilogue. Bill, and bills, and bills, and bills.

2 CHRISTMAS DAYS

Island of Madagascar the Only Country Thus Favored.

Queen Ranavalona II on Ascending Throne Became First Christian Ruler and Adopted "Glory to God in Highest" Motto.

There is only one spot in the whole world where Christmas is celebrated twice each year and that is the Island of Madagascar, off the eastern coast of the southern end of Africa, and which dominates that part of the Indian ocean.

Marco Polo, the great traveler, first made this island known to medieval Europe in 1293. It was nearly two hundred years later when a Portuguese traveler obtained the first authentic information about the island, in 1497. From that time on there were attempts by the Portuguese, French and English to settle the island, and they met with defeat at the hands of the wild and savage Hovas, who controlled the island, and many died from Malaria fever in the lowlands of the coast. On Christmas eve in 1672 all the Frenchmen at Fort Dauphin were murdered by the natives. In 1810 a Hova chief, Radama I, a young man, allowed the Christian missionaries to teach their Bible doctrines in the island, and by 1820 Protestant Christianity was effectively introduced among the Hovas.

First Christian Ruler.

Radama died in 1828, and one of his wives became Queen Ranavalona I. She was bitter against the Christians and persecuted them in many cruel ways, and she had her warriors from the interior mountains of the island massacre the native Christians, who would not renounce the Christian God and go back to the worship of idols. The cruel queen reigned until her death in 1861—a wicked record of 33 years. Then her son, Radama II, became king, and although he was a great drunkard and led a wild life himself, he allowed the Christian missionaries to come into the island again. He was assassinated in the palace in 1863, and his widow, Rasoherina, was proclaimed queen. Upon her death in 1868, a niece of Ranavalona I ascended the throne as Ranavalona II. When a girl, her gentle charities and sympathies with the Christians during their persecutions had won respect and love, and when she became queen it was understood that Madagascar had the first really Christian ruler on its throne.

Between 1820 and 1835 the entire Bible had been printed in the Malagasy language, also an English-Malagasy dictionary. So, on the day of her coronation the idol which had been prominent on similar occasions was banished by Ranavalona II, and a copy of the Malagasy Bible placed near the throne; while on the canopy above, in golden letters, were the words: "Glory to God in the Highest, Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men." With one hand on the Bible, the queen addressed the people, expressing the hope that they would adopt the Christian faith, but added: "In this matter you shall not be compelled."

Ordered Idols Destroyed.

She ordered her own household idols and the chief national idol to be burned and gradually her example was followed by the general destruction of household idols among the Hovas. She married the prime minister the following year and made a public profession of her faith, and from that time on the Christian religion has been growing fast in the island.

The works over the canopy at her coronation the queen knew to be spoken by the angels in the sky when the shepherds heard the noise of wings at the time the Christ was born in Bethlehem. Christmas is celebrated all over the island now. But the Hovas have a different way of computing time and by their system Christmas falls some time in November, and they celebrate it then. The Christian date of December 25 is also celebrated by the natives along with the missionaries.

But it is not a Christmas of snow and sleighbells. It is a tropical country and Christmas day is under a torrid sun, but the sky is brilliant and the magnificent flowering trees of many vivid colors are filled with many peculiar birds of brilliant plumage, while the ground beneath is bespangled with wild blossoms of varied hues.

DAY OF DAYS FOR KIDDIES

Christmas Outranks All Other Holidays for the Happiness and Merrymaking of the Youngsters.

Above all other holidays, Christmas is children's day. If possible, they should be made happy on that day. But they should not be permitted to be selfishly so.

In times past there has been a tendency on the part of many of us to give too many gifts, and too expensive ones, to our children. We have been waste-

The Little Christ Is Coming

The little Christ is coming down Across the field of snow. The pine trees greet him where they stand; The willows bend to kiss his hand; The mountain laurel is ablaze In hidden nooks, the wind, alight And lit, looms, faint the violet wake Before their time for his sweet sake. The stars, down dropping, form a crown Upon the waiting hills below— The little Christ is coming down Across the fields of snow.

The little Christ is coming down Across the city street.

The wind blows coldly from the north; His dimpled hands are stretching forth, And no one knows, and no one cares, The priests are busy with their prayers; The jostling crowd hastes on apace, And no one sees the pleading face. None hears the cry as through the town He wanders with his small, cold feet— The little Christ is coming down Across the city street.

—Harriet F. Blodgett.

The Christmas Spirit

Christmas peace is God's; and he must give it himself, with his own hand, or we shall never get it. Go then to God himself. Thou art his child, as Christmas day declares; be not afraid to go unto thy father. Pray to him; tell him what thou wantest; say, "Father, I am not moderate, reasonable, forbearing. I fear I cannot keep Christmas aright, for I have not a peaceful Christmas spirit in me; and I know that I shall never get it by thinking, and reading and understanding; for it passes all that, and lies far beyond it, does peace, in the very essence of thine undivided, unmovable, absolute, eternal Godhead, which no change nor decay of this created world, nor sin or folly of men or devils, can ever alter, but which abideth forever what it is, in perfect rest, and perfect power and perfect love.—Kingsley.

ful. We should not love our children less—indeed we would show greater love—by being careful what we give them. Too many toys incline children to be both wasteful and destructive. When the youngsters are left to invent some of their playthings, their imaginations are developed, and they become more capable of doing things.

This Christmas would be a good time to begin teaching children unselfishness and the joy of giving. Many a poor mother is struggling to provide food and shelter for her children and has nothing to give them from Santa Claus. The children of such mothers are going to have wide, wistful, tear-stained eyes. They are going to crave the joys of a Christmas day that may not be theirs.

While our fathers, brothers and sons are at the front, risking health and life for us, for our country, for good in the world, let us not forget those children who lack a father's care and protection. The good fellows are doing much. But they need our help both in giving and in seeking out the needy. They need our aid in distributing as well as providing.

Let us not forget the spirit for which Christmas stands. It is to give freely, to do service to mankind. Let us give love. Let us give sympathetic understanding. Let us give ourselves. He lives most who lives for others. And he who shall have made a child happy on Christmas morning will have done a service in his name.

CHRISTMAS AND THE SPIRIT

Necessary to Manifest Unselfishness and the Love Christ Brought to the World.

Two artists were asked to make a copy of a famous painting. The one made mathematical calculations, and produced a technically correct copy. The other studied the painting, entered into the spirit of the artist, and produced not merely an imitation, but a picture which glowed with warmth and life. We are not, as Christians, simply to copy Christ, but rather to become possessed of his spirit and so reproduce his life in our lives. At this Christmas season let us aim to become possessed of the spirit of Christ, and so reproduce his life.

In "Little Women" there is a story told by Louisa Alcott out of the experience of her own early days. The four children who are her heroines, knowing of a neighbor in need, go in a little procession and carry her their breakfast. Another incident may be recalled. It may not have been precisely Christmastic, but it was winter, and the weather was bitterly cold. The stock of wood was low, and night had fallen, when there came a knock at the door. A shivering child stood there, saying that her mother had no wood, that the baby was sick and the father gone on a spree. She begged for a little wood. "Divide our stock with her," said Mr. Alcott, "and we will trust in Providence. The weather will moderate, or wood will come." No wonder that the children trained in the Alcott household grew up heedless of privation and generous to those whose need was great. This is the true Christmas spirit. If our Christmastic is pervaded by real unselfishness, we shall manifest to every one the love that Christ brought to the world.

Dick Had Something to Say.

At the funeral services for an elderly negro of Richmond, Va., the following colloquy was overheard:

"There ain't no use in talkin'," said Mose Barker; "Dick Williams, he was the most charitable man dis town ever seen."

"I reckon dat's so," said the darkey to whom Mr. Barker imparted this information. And he paused as if waiting for evidence on this point.

"Yessuh," continued Mr. Barker. "Dick Williams, he always owned a plug hat, and durin' my time I ain't never heard that Dick ever refused to lend dat hat to anybody."

Dog Had Something to Say.

The Hon. John W. Davis, appointed our ambassador in London in succession to Mr. Page, is an eminent lawyer.

Mr. Davis tells the story of a very small boy who was trying to lead a big St. Bernard up a busy thoroughfare. "Where are you going to take that dog, my little chap?" inquired a passerby. "I'm going to see where—where he wants to go first," was the breathless reply.

Relics of Aztec Era.

Near Phoenix, within the Salt river valley, are to be found seven communal settlements of the same pre-natal Aztec era, with central buildings that were far larger than that at Casa Grande, a writer in the Christian Science Monitor states. To the northward and northeast every river valley retains evidence of the passage of at least a portion of these peoples, for some reason leaving their cities and seeking the mountains and the upper plateaus.

"The Sport of Kings."

A mantle of rich silk or cloth appears to have been the usual prize for horse racing in the fourteenth century; bells and gold snaffles were run tury in the fifteenth century; cups gradually came into fashion in the sixteenth century. Racing colors of silk and satin seem to have been in use in Henry the Eighth's reign.

Prevention Rather Than Cure.

To cure is as expensive as to prevent, and prevention eliminates the loss as well.



Christmas Afternoon

The afternoon of Christmas day may be rather a quiet one for the older folks. The gifts have been unwrapped, and arranged and hovered over from time to time. The usually tidy room looks like a bazaar for the sale of fancy goods. Perhaps neighbors and other friends may come to exchange "Merry Christmases!" and to say, "May I thank you here for your lovely gift?"

Between the dark and the daylight, after the callers have gone and the children have returned from their play, comes the peaceful and happy Christmas evening. The great day is dying; Christmas is nearly over. It will be a whole year before we shall enjoy its merriment again or remember happy Christmas seasons of the past. We may lose many things—home, friends, health, money—but memory abides, and no one can take from us the happiness that has once been ours.

On Christmas night we remember the old days. We think of those who were once here to share our joys. "Christmas never can be the same again!" many people exclaim when they feel as if the joy of life has gone forever. If we all took that view Christmas itself might die. It depends upon deep spiritual insight.

Let us, if we can, forget our troubles and even our sorrows and try to rejoice. If we have children about us it is not hard to be merry, but if we have none of our own there are a great many who ought to be made glad and may be found with but little trouble.

A merry Christmas to you all! And I would add Tiny Tim's words, "God bless us, every one!" —Dolly Wayne in Philadelphia Public Ledger.

SANTA! DON'T YOU DARE!

We love our daughter dearly, For her our lives we'd soak, But she wants a ukulele For Christmas. Holy smoke!

PEACE.

Blow, bugles of battle, the marches of peace; East, West, North and South let the long quarrel cease; Sing the song of great joy that the angels began, Sing of glory to God and of good will to men. —Whittier.

WORTH TRYING.

Would it do to give the Christmas spirit by working it into a neat set of New tons?

FROM THE HEART.

"Not because it's in the air But because I really care Merry Christmas." —Anon.

INDEED, HE WAS.

The Brother—I planted a kiss on her cheek beneath the mistletoe. The Sister—Raise anything? The Brother—Yes, her father raised—well, he was very angry.